



Special Decorations, Words & Traditions for Christmas

“Noel” – the French word for Christmas, and it is a shortened form of “Nouvelles”, which means “News”, or Good News, as Christians call the message of salvation in Jesus the Christ.

Poinsettias—are native to Mexico. They were named after America's first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett. He brought the plants to America in 1828. The Mexicans in the eighteenth century thought the plants were symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus the Poinsettia became associated with the Christmas season. The actual flower of the poinsettia is small and yellow. But surrounding the flower are large, bright red leaves, often mistaken for petals

Holly, Ivy, Spruce, Fir, Pine, Boxwood – all of these are evergreen plants which, because they stay green all year, symbolize the eternal life given us by Jesus Christ.

Wreaths – round or circular arrangements of greens or leaves for decoration at Christmas time

Advent – the 40-day period of time which precedes Christmas Day.

Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh—gifts from the 3 Wise Men to the infant Christ.

Santa Claus – the original Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, was born in Turkey in the 4th century. A devout Christian pastor, he became widely known for his generosity for the poor, especially in providing dowries (bride money) for poor women so that they could find husbands. He is especially noted for his love of children. December 6 was traditionally celebrated as the feast day of St. Nicholas. In 16th century Holland, Dutch children would place their wooden shoes by the hearth in hopes that they would be filled with a treat. The Dutch spelled St. Nicholas as Sint Nikolaas, which changed to Sinterklaas, and then finally, in English to Santa Claus.

In 1822, Clement C. Moore composed his famous poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which was later published as "The Night Before Christmas." Moore is credited with creating the modern image of Santa Claus as a jolly fat man in a red suit. Before this time, St. Nicholas had no connection at all with Christmas. Because this poem depicts Santa Claus as riding in a sleigh driven by reindeer, you sometimes see sleighs, reindeer, Santas, and Santa boots as decorations.